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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today that on August 3, 2004, a federal jury convicted five members of the Third Ward Gang of Petersburg, Virginia. Each of the following defendants was convicted of conspiring to violate the federal RICO statute and conspiring to distribute crack cocaine:

- Antoine D. Allen, a.k.a. "Ski," age 20;
- Mario L. Allen, age 23;
- Kevin Batts, a.k.a. "K-Smooth," age 20;
- Christopher Brown, a.k.a. "Beav," age 26; and
- Kevin Langston, a.k.a. "Little One," age 30.

Evidence presented at trial established that from 1998 through 2003, the Third Ward Gang operated an open air drug market in the Heights area of Petersburg, Virginia. Gang members, often armed with firearms, manufactured and distributed crack cocaine throughout the day and night and maintained control over their territories through numerous acts of violence and intimidation. In returning the guilty verdict, the jury found that the Third Ward Gang operated as a crack cocaine distribution enterprise and that to further the business of that enterprise, gang members murdered Robert Brabson, Jr., an innocent bystander, during a drive-by shooting on August 28, 2001. Based on their role in the killing of Brabson, both Allen brothers will face mandatory terms of life imprisonment when they are sentenced November 17, 2004. Langston will also face a mandatory life term based on his participation in the attempted murder of a rival gang member. Brown will face a mandatory minimum term of at least 20 years, and Batts will face a mandatory minimum term of ten years.

A total of 36 gang members were charged in the case. Thirty-one defendants pled guilty to either conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine or the racketeering charge. Each defendant faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum term of life imprisonment, and several have already received sentences exceeding 15 years.

United States Attorney McNulty stated: "With these five verdicts and the earlier guilty pleas from co-defendants, the citizens of Petersburg are assured that 36 dangerous gang members will no longer be able to prey upon their neighborhoods. I hope this shows the youth of Petersburg that there is no glamour in street gangs."

Also announcing the sentence is Donald Thompson, Special Agent-In-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Resident Office; and Petersburg Police Chief Morris Jones.

The case was investigated by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Petersburg Police Department and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Roderick C. Young and Raymond E. Patricco Jr.

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